

[The Adams Diggings]

Interviews [??]

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THE ADAMS DIGGINGS

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Since I came to New Mexico, eighteen years ago, I have heard stories of the wealth of the famous, old, lost Adams Diggings Mine. I have heard at least a dozen different stories and each succeeding story made the mine richer both in actual gold value and romantic interest. As is often the way with lost mines of this type, it all depends on who you listen to, whether the mine gets richer or not. It always seemed strange to me that nearly every old-timer will swear that he knows more about a fabulously rich, lost mine than any other old prospector. H will try to discredit other prospectors who have searched for the mine and in an effort to tell something "bigger", magnify its riches by many [?] what others have estimated it at. In reality, none of them know or have the slightest idea as to the value of the lost mine, because it has never been found.

The current story and the one that seems to be the most popular, is one that I read in the El Paso [?] a few years ago. It stated that a bunch of men, among them Edward Adams, who purportedly found the mine that was later named for him, organized an expedition to go to California. Their probably starting place was Magdalena. They traveled in a northwesterly direction, until somewhere between Magdalena and old Fort San Rafael, they camped on a little stream. C10-N. Mex.

One of the men noticed gold in the stream and excitedly revealed his discovery to the rest. Adams, who knew a little more about mining than his companions, decided that the gold

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washed into the stream from a rich outcropping above the camp. Taking his partner, a man by the name of Davidson with him, he left camp and traveled up the 2 canyon about a mile to try to discover the "mother lode".

A little while after they had disappeared around a bend in the creek, the expedition was attacked by Apaches, and as they caught the encampment totally unprepared, the Indians massacred every man in camp.

Adams and Davidson heard the firing, and [?] its cause, took to the cover of the bushes on the nearby hillside. After hiding for several hours, the two men cautiously made their way over the hill and saw that the Apaches had left, secure in the belief that they had killed all the men of the expedition, and had taken all the mules and horses with them.

After burying all the dead, Adams and Davidson knocked a few pieces of gold-bearing ore off an outcropping of quarts that they believed to be the "mother lode". They then purported made their way to Fort San Rafael, where they said they asked for aid to go back and find the gold and were refused by the officer in charge.

They then made their way affot and after perilous hardships and a great deal of suffering, came into the little town of Reserve, in what is now Catron County. It is said that they showed [?] of the ore to several of the natives, and then after borrowing some money on the strength of the richness of the ore, bought horses and went to Pima, Arizona, where Adams had friends whom he thought had enough money to properly outfit an expedition to return to the place where he had found the gold.

The expedition was organized, and traveled from Pima to Alma and thence to the immediate locality where Adams was supposed to have found the gold. But through some freak of nature of loss or direction, they could not find the gold, or even the place where the men had been massacred. Perhaps it was because Adams and Davidson both were notoriously poor in remembering directions. Many expeditions 3 have been organized

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since then, but to this day, the Adams Diggings remains as much a mystery as when Adams first told of it.

Now I am going to tell a story that is almost completely at variance with the story printed by the El Paso Herald. It is a first-hand story from the lips of Bob Lewis, pioneer, old-time prospector, cowboy and for the better part of his manhood, a frontier peace officer and a personal friend of Edward Adams. Bob is a big man, well over six-feet and weighing in the vicinity of two-hundred pounds. He always have a jovial greeting and manner, and has the map of Ireland printed all over his face. Big, rough and burly, he has been the [?] of many crooks and lawbreaker in [?] County. He lives in Magdalena. He has been over nearly every section of the southwestern corner of the State of New Mexico, and knows its rugged terrain as well or better than nearly any other man. He is reknowned for his lack of fear, and truthfulness. That is why I believe his account of the Adams Diggings far more than any of the others I have heard. Here is the story in his own words:

"Sure I knowed old Adams. I knowed him before he left Magdalena, and after he came back. Never was a bigger old liar. [?] he'd tell a lie when the truth would fit better. He was used to braggin' and stretchin' the truth. He [???] drinkin' man too. I knowed him to stay drunk six months out of the year," (maybe this was an exaggeration, but [?] people have told so [?] the same thing) "and then go on [?] and throw a big drunk the rest of the year.

It was in the early part of August, 1864, when Adams and about seven other men organized a trappin' expedition and started up in the northwestern part of the state to trap beaver. They started early and intended to get their camp set up before cold weather came. They camped on a little stream not far from old Fort San Fafael, which is 4 now Fort Wingate and has been moved a few miles from the old site of Fort San Rafael.

Now I don't know this for certain, but I believe from events which I will try to explain later, that just about dark, a caravan from California stopped and threw camp with Adams party. They had stopped at Fort Wingate two days before and had told the commanding officer

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that they were transporting between sixty and eighty thousand dollars in placer gold from California to some of the Eastern states. I know that they were never seen after the time Adams party was wiped out by the Indians, so I believe that they camped with Adams party and met the same fate.

I know from Adams personal character, that he was not above ambushing such a caravan. I did not know Davidson, but as he was Adams sidekick, I believe he threw in with Adams and the two of 'em made plans to hijack the California outfit and steal their gold.

An encampment like that, in those days, usually got us an hour or two before daylight, in order to make an early start. It is said that Adams and Davidson made an excuse to go and gather some wood, as wood had been scarce the evening before and they had not been able to obtain a sufficient supply. I believe that Adams and Davidson absented themselves from camp, so they could go down country a few miles and find a suitable place for waylaying the California outfit.

While they were gone, and it must have been just as good daylight came, because that is the [?] time when Indians usually attack, a big bunch of Apaches attacked the camp. So complete must have been the surprise, that the white men could not have had a very good chance to grab their guns and defend themselves. Every man in that camp was killed, scalped and their bodies mutilated, and all their provisions, horses and mules stolen by the Apaches.

When Adams and Davidson returned to camp, they must have congratulated 5 themselves on the luck that had caused them to absent themselves from camp. Rummaging around among the supplies, Adams must have found the gold the California outfit had been carrying. As proof of this, I later saw a handful of this gold that Adams had save when he buried the rest and it was a quality entirely foreign to that part of New Mexico and identical with some I had seen from California Diggin's. The pellets were about the size

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of a pinhead, up to as big as a pinto bean, and I knew that nobody ever found that kind of gold in the parts of New Mexico I have prospected over.

After burying the gold in what they considered a safe place, the two made their way afoot, supposedly, to Fort San Rafael, where they said they reported the massacre to the authorities in charge and petitioned aid from the commanding officer to go back and help them relocate a mine they had found and to view the remains of the Indian attack.

I do not believe this last part, because many years later, I happened to be in Evans [?], in March 1890, where Adams, who had been drinkin' pretty heavy, related a story of how he had gone to Fort San Rafael, on a certain day (he mentioned the exact date, which I can not now remember) in August, 1864, and petitioned the commanding officer for aid to return to give decent burial to the massacred party and offer him and Davidson, protection while they tried to relocate a rich gold [?].

There happened to be an old, retired Army officer in the saloon who had listened intently to Adams story. This man was Captain Sanborn, who was considered a heavy drinker. However, he did not appear to be drunk at this particular time, and he answered Adams:

"Sir, since the latter part of your speech concerns me, and it is most damaging to my character, I now take it upon myself to refute your statements and call you a contemptible, damned liar. I 6 happened to be the commanding officer of Fort San Rafael at the time of which you are talking. I recall the day of which you speak very clearly and to my knowledge you never set foot in that Fort in your life. It could never be said truthfully that Cap Sanborn ever refused aid to anybody within a weeks [?] of my post who needed it."

"Who's a damn liar?" bellowed Adams. "Yuh better eat them words cap, or me an' you are agoin' to tangle right here an' now. Bigod! I don't like army officers anyway, so I might as well wipe up th' floor with one of 'em right now." Saying which, he started for Sanborn.

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Cap Sanborn ran behind the lunch counter and grabbed a big butcher knife and jumped over the counter. Adams ran out the front door and Sanborn chased him for a couple of blocks shouting that Adams was the dirtiest liar that ever lived. He could not catch Adams, and returned to the saloon, where he again told everybody in hearing distance that Adams had not ever been to Fort San Rafael.

From the above incident I drew the conclusion that Adams and Davidson never went to Fort San Rafael at all, but passed a considerable distance to the south in an effort to avoid it. They limped into the little town of Reserve, sore-footed and half-starved.

It was in Reserve that Adams showed a couple of pieces of ore in quartz form that [?] exceedingly rich, and stated that it was from the mine he had found before the Indians had massacred his party. He made no mention of the California expedition.

I later saw the same samples Adams had shown in Reserve and recalled that Adams had showed me one of the samples before he left Magdalena in 1864. He had told me then that he had given an Indian some whiskey for the samples and had promised him more if he would show him where he got the amples. If Adams story he told in Reserve about these samples had been true, there would indeed have been a substantial claim to his having found a rich mine. This is where all such stories [?] from and these [??] the [?] I have 7 ever seen in my life, and must have come from one of the richest mines ever heard of. But to my knowledge, no ore of similar quality has ever been found, and the Indian who gave the samples to Adams must be long since dead and the place he found the samples will probably never be found.

Adams didn't dare show any of the gold at that time he had stolen and buried. Therefore he and Davidson separated, Adams going to Pima, Arizona to obtain money and supplies from friends to outfit an expedition to later come back and salvage the gold. Davidson went on a supposed visit to see some relatives in Louisiana.

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Adams was successful in his attempt to raise an expedition, and he sent for Davidson who returned from Louisiana and the expedition met him in Alma, a little town just south of Reserve. They could not find any gold, and Adams later made several solitary trips in search of it, but never had any luck.

Several expeditions have been organized and sent forth in an effort to find the Adams Diggings, but all have met with defeat. It was in 1818 that I decided to see if I couldn't find the bodies of the men who were massacred in Adams party. Adams had told me that they had camped about fifteen miles north of three peaks that rose up from the plain and were a considerable distance from any other mountains. I got to thinkin' and the only three peaks I knew of between Gallup and Magdalena, were the Tres Montosas, which are only about fifteen miles west of Magdalena. Figuring about fifteen or twenty miles north of there, I went to North Lake. A few miles north of North Lake, I found the bodies of five men, all buried in one hole. I could find no clue to any gold from anything in the vicinity, so I came back to town and reported the finding of the bodies. It is my belief that the bodies I found were the remains of part of Adams expedition, but of course I can't prove this. But there is one thing I do know. That is that an old fellow I know, found about twenty thousand dollars buried about five miles north of North Lake, and only a few miles from the place I discovered there bodies. This mans name is Jose Maria Jaramillo, and this what he told me. But when I asked him if the twenty thousand was in gold dust, he would not tell me.

That's the way a lot of there old, "rich-nice" stories get started," finished old bob. "I've heard that the definition of a miner is a damn liar with a hole in the ground. And a prospector is a damn liar without anything but a dang good imagination. You can talk to most of 'em, and dang near ever' one of 'em tells you about some rich prospect they struck. But they're always broke and beggin' a grubstake. If their mines was half as rich as their imaginations, they could take a handpick, and a gold pan and make more money in a month than most bank presidents could by wearin' out a half a dozen fountains pens. It's true that sometimes a prospector does hit it rich, but when he does, he generally don't talk

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and brag on it, but gets busy and gets some capital interested and starts workin' it. That's my story of the Adams Diggings. It is one of the richest mines in the world in the mind of a danged old liar like I knowed Ed Adams to be, and in the minds of a bunch of old, dream-crazy prospectors who aint got no more sense than to believe in it."